

Rob Ingram Summit Opens March 16

For the second year running, the Rob Ingram Youth Summit Against Violence will bring together Portland youth to discuss the kinds of violence they face every day.

The event – totally free to all youth under 21 – will be held on Saturday March 16 at the Ambridge Event Center, 1333 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr., Boulevard, Portland.

The event is an opportunity for youth from all communities to make their voices count

Organized and run by Multnomah Youth Commission, the event is designed to give young people room to speak their truth.

Breakfast will start at 9:15 a.m. followed by activities, a panel featuring young people, sharing stories, lunch, and sessions where youth tell adults their opinions about how to deal with different kinds of violence and how to help youth succeed.

Discussions will look at violence in the home, in relationships, on the Internet, in gangs, from police, and in school. Restorative justice, an alternative to punishment will also be discussed. Youth willing to co-lead sessions on gang violence, police and cyberbullying are still needed at the event.

Raffles in the afternoon will deliver 40 prizes, including: two pairs of Soul Republic headphones, front-row tickets to the Portland Timbers v. the L.A. Galaxy; \$25 gift certificates to Fred Meyers, I-Tunes; Regal cinemas and many more; four basketballs, one signed by the entire Trailblazer team; an I-Home; backpacks and 10 soccer balls. The main prize will be a \$250 computer tablet.

Rob Ingram was director of Portland's Office of Youth Violence Prevention until his death in November 2011. Ingram was a champion of youth and understood the difficulties facing youth of color, low income youth and gang-affected youth.

The event is an opportunity for youth from all communities to make their voices count. Upcoming City of Portland budget decisions could strip funding from youth work programs, such as Summer Works and



YungMil and Qualisha Carte attended last year.

PHOTO BY HELEN SILVIS

Summer Youth Connect, for example.

One in four Portlanders is a youth under the age of 18. All youth are invited to

attend the summit, eat, and take part in this event. For info go to www.multco.us and search for Rob Ingram Youth Summit.

Coal

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jected export terminal also are very close to the tracks.

Multnomah County Health department issued a report on the proposal last week, calling for a regional impact study before any decision is made. That's supported by Whatcom County Docs, a group of around 200 doctors in Washington state, who have reviewed current scientific findings on coal transportation and pollution.

"The effects of air pollution are not hypothetical, but real and measurable," the doctors say in a report. "Many of the reviewed studies, some of which were conducted in the Seattle area, show significant health effects of exposure to everyday airborne pollutant levels that are below national U.S. Environment Protection Agency guidelines.

"As physicians, we feel the risks to human health from massive coal shipments across our state and through our communities are significant, and we call for a com-

prehensive Health Impact Assessment, in addition to an Environmental Impact Statement, addressing these issues along the entire rail corridor."

Increased noise levels from trains are also a health risk, the doctors note. Noise has been linked to heart disease, stroke, sleep disorders, mental illness, and damage to children's brain development. Another potential harmful impact would be delays to

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emergency traffic such as ambulances.

The 19-20 percent increase in train traffic would increase diesel emissions from the trains, as well as send an undetermined amount of coal dust into the air. How much? Nobody knows.

"I don't think there are any reliable estimates right now that the public can review," says Eric de Place, policy director at the Sightline Institute, an environmental non-profit. Railroad companies have offered some numbers (645 lbs over 400 miles their estimates vary widely vary widely, he says.

"We have a mountain of research that shows coal dust is extremely hazardous in an enclosed environment in an occupational setting. But the public has not seen research on incidental exposure to coal dust, and there are really good reasons to be concerned."

Besides the coal trains traveling on the south side of the Columbia, other plans would bring coal through Portland on barges traveling down the Columbia, and the proposals also call for additional trains to travel through Washington State on the north side of the Columbia River.

People of color, poor people and the elderly are disproportionately represented

among those likely to be most affected. That's a concern, because those groups already suffer from higher rates of heart disease, asthma and other lung diseases, cancer and other problems which can be worsened by air pollution and the stress of train traffic.

Children too are at higher risk because coal dust, diesel particulates and noise have been shown to hurt their development. A child whose lungs are damaged, for example, may suffer from decreased lung function for their whole lives.

Studies have shown that miners and people living close to coal mining suffer from ailments connected to the dust. But far less is known about the impact of coal from trains. Weather conditions, track conditions, the type of coal and how it is loaded all may play a part.

One study by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Co. found that spraying a chemical on the coal cut 85 percent of the coal dust. But other railroad companies called that study "junk science" in an Oct. 1 filing to the Surface Transportation Board.

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Link says if the bill does pass in the Legislature, it will be struck down as unconstitutional.

"I would expect it to be challenged fairly quickly," Link said. "I think it's unconstitutional because it violates both the Fourth Amendment and Washington State law.

"The Washington state constitution says you can't invade privacy without reason to suspect that a crime has been committed," Link says. "Police officers can't just conduct suspicionless searches just because they want to."

The issue has been controversial in other states, especially since the Connecticut school shooting. Even though the vast majority of shooting deaths have nothing to do with schools, NRA spokesman Wayne LaPierre called for arming teachers. And several cities have moved to increase police presence or security in schools.

After Sandy Hook school shooting the Obama administration allocated \$150 mil-

lion to schools, saying it could be used to hire up to 1,000 more on-campus police or counselors, or purchase security technology.

But civil rights advocates say more police in schools means more children of color

The issue has been controversial in other states, especially since the Connecticut school shooting

caught in the school to prison pipeline.

So why we are spending more and more money on law enforcement in schools, instead of making schools safer by meeting the needs of students with inspiring teachers, counselors and staff who can help stu-

dents with troubles at home?

Susan Ferris of The Center for Public Integrity looked at the issue in her report, "Controversy over cops in schools flares anew." Ferris found that increase in the numbers of police in schools has been accompanied by controversy over racial profiling and what critics say are unjustified arrests for minor discipline problems.

In Los Angeles, for example, more than 40 percent of police tickets went to children under the age of 14, most of them from low-income families. And high profile cases in New York have found students handcuffed and chained to desks for infractions such as writing on a desk.

In fact, judges in Los Angeles and elsewhere have complained that students are being sent to court for discipline problems that schools should handle.

Lawsuits have followed, Ferris says. The NAACP has filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education.

And the ACLU has filed several lawsuits against schools, including in New York, Salt Lake City, and Denver, Calif.

"In DeSoto County, Miss. officers and a school district were sued after a bus surveillance video — seen in part by a reporter — revealed officers unjustifiably arresting black students, the suit alleged, and threatening others with a "bullet between the eyes."

Still, across the country, politicians and state legislatures have been moving to add more police to schools. Ferris reported the Department of Justice found police presence in schools increased 40 percent between 1997 and 2007. Ferris found that Mississippi, Alabama and Indiana are just three states proposing to fund more officers in schools. And Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Oklahoma and South Carolina are all considering bills to arm school staff.